

A Potted History of St Thomas' -by Pam Brimelow

1830 (2 nd February)	As Chesterfield expanded to the west a 'Commissioners' church (see below) was planned to serve the growing population. It was designed by John Woodhead and William Hurst in the Gothic Revival Style. The government gave a grant of £2,063 towards the building costs. The Foundation Stone of St Thomas' was laid by William Spencer 6th Duke of Devonshire.
1831 (27 th July)	St Thomas' Church opened for services by Henry Ryder, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry. St Thomas' Parish was part of Lichfield Diocese at this time. First Incumbent Rev. Matson Vincent (Perpetual Curate).
1832	St Thomas' Schools (a National Day School) was opened at Brampton Moor.
1832 (9 th August)	St Thomas' Church and Churchyard were consecrated by the Bishop of Lichfield (tickets 1 shilling!).
1841 (October)	St Peter's, Holymoorside, combined Church and School opened.
1846	Rev. John Beridge Jebb (Perpetual Curate July 1846 to November 1862).
1863	Rev John Magens Mello (Perpetual Curate and then Rector in 1867).
1867 (16 th August)	The Parish of St Thomas' Brampton was declared a Rectorial Benefice.
c1870	Parish Magazine first published. History of magazine here
1887	St Thomas' Brampton now part of the new Diocese of Southwell
1887	Rev. Charles Edward Little (Rector).
1887	St Thomas' closed for re-seating and other alterations (services held in St Thomas' Schools); old 'high back' box pews with doors removed and pitch pine pews installed (removed in re-ordering of 1999).
1887 (13 th October)	The 'Maithouse Mission' (fore-runner of St Mark's Lower Brampton) opened in Brewery Yard.
1887	Mr G M May resigned as organist. Mr J S Lancaster appointed organist and choir master.
1887	Brass Eagle Lectern presented by Philip Henry Chandler.
1887 (25 th December)	Oak pulpit installed at St Thomas' (gift of Mr & Mrs Frederick Stanton).
1888 (29 th August)	Foundation stone for new Chancel laid by Mrs Alfred Barnes.
1888	Two cottages on the corner of Holymoorside Lane (now Walton Back Lane) acquired for a Mission Church at Walton.
1889	Rev. Edward Starkie Shuttleworth (Rector).

1889	Walton 'Cottage Mission' opened. Prior to this the congregation met in a room provided by Mrs Jebb, widow of St Thomas' second Incumbent.
1891 (7th July)	New chancel and extension to the churchyard consecrated by George Ridding, Bishop of Southwell.
1891	East window installed - gift of Philip Henry and Ann Elizabeth Chandler in memory of Susan Marsden (former Sunday School teacher).
1894	Lower Brampton Mission Church was built on the foundations of two cottages on Hipper Street West. The 'Maithouse Mission' was closed.
1896	Rev. Henry Edward Ferry (Rector).
1900	Rev. Edward Charles Stukeley (Rector).
1903 (2 nd September)	Church reopened after removal of West gallery. The Church was restored, structurally improved and decorated at a cost of £1,500. The ceiling was decorated as it today.
1906	Rev. Frederick Herbert Burnside (Rector).
1906	The organ was rebuilt and considerably enlarged at a cost of £534.
1908	First mention of St Mark's as the title of the Lower Brampton Mission Church.
1914	Burial ground added to St Peter's Holymoorside.
1916	May 27 th St John's new Mission Church dedicated by the Bishop.
1919 (20 th April Easter Day)	The 'May Window' was installed. A stained glass window in south aisle installed (depicting St Thomas in the centre with King David to his left and St Cecilia to his right) gift of Mrs Frances E S May in memory of her husband Godfrey Melland May, one time voluntary organist.
1920 (October)	A representative from the Midland Clock Works, Derby, assisted by Mr William Rhodes fixed the new clock in the church tower. "It should strike the hours and should be heard from a quarter of a mile away. The erection of this clock will satisfy a need that has been long felt, for there is no public clock that strikes the hours nearer than the Market Hall, and the whole Brampton district will be deeply grateful to the donors". The weight of the bell it will strike is between 4 and 5 cwt. More details and pictures here
1920 (24 th October)	Dedication of Church Tower clock given by Mr Thomas Scott and erected at the cost of Mr Joseph Haslam as a thank offering for the safe return of his sons from the Great War.
1920 (December)	"...the present state of our chancel is a reproach to us ..." The chancel floor was replaced, new steps at chancel arch and altar rail within sanctuary. The stones removed from the Chancel were used to form part of the platform and base for the War Memorial.

1921 (1 st June)	Re-opening of the Chancel. Sir Edwyn Hoskins, Bishop of Southwell dedicated the high altar, and the oak reredos in memory of Captain Thomas Greaves, 18 th Sherwood Foresters, who died of wounds in France, July 1918 -gift of his parents Mr & Mrs T Greaves. The new glass mosaic chancel floor was also dedicated.
1921 (18 th September)	The Duke of Devonshire unveiled the granite War Memorial to 210 Brampton men who gave their lives during the Great War. The War Memorial, (erected at a cost of £900), a Granite Cross was made of Cornish Granite ("preferable to Derbyshire stone as it would weather better"). More details and pictures here
1921 (November Armistice Day)	The first service of Remembrance was held on the steps of the War Memorial.
1923	Mr J C Simon appointed organist and choirmaster.
1925	Rev, Hubert John Sililtoe (Rector).
1926	The new parish of St Augustine, Birdholme was instituted. This affected St Thomas' Parish boundaries as the Boythorpe Estate became part of the new parish.
1926 (4 th April Easter Day)	Tabernacle, crucifix and candlesticks for the. Lady Altar (in the south aisle) given in memory of Mr & Mrs Oliver W Plowright.
1926	The tower vestry and stairs to the tower top installed.
1927 (7 th July)	The Diocese of Southwell was divided and a new Diocese of Derby, founded by an Order in Council, came into operation. It consisted of the Derby and Chesterfield Archdeaconries.
1927 (26 th October to November 4 th)	The Hallowing of the Diocese and Cathedral of Derby. The Reverend Dr Edmund Courtenay Pearce, Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge was consecrated first Bishop of Derby on 29 October.
1927	St Mark's Mission Church extensively altered.
1929	St Thomas' Schools closed.
1930	After refurbishment, the Schools buildings opened as the Parish Hall.
1930	St Thomas' organ was cleaned and repaired and new stops added.
1935	St Mark's Mission Church was designated a 'Conventional district'. The Rev John A Pittman was Priest in Charge of Lower Brampton (6,000 people).
1935 (December)	Dedication of oak canopied panelling (in memory of Miss M J Haynes) in the chancel and sanctuary and two new priests' stalls. Oak panel on south side details names of Vicars and Rectors of this parish. The oak panelling of the Sanctuary and the Chancel was erected in memory of Mary Jane Greaves.
1936 (August)	8 bells installed in the Church tower by Messrs Taylor & Co. Loughborough. Given in memory of Stephen Melland and Godfrey Melland May. More details and pictures here
1936 (12 th September)	Bells blessed by the Bishop of Derby.

1936 (30 th September)	Bishop Jackson Rector of Astbury, Cheshire and formerly Bishop of the Windward Islands dedicated the window set in the south east corner of the nave in memory of members of the Scott family. The Scott window (depicting the Virgin and child surrounded by several Saints) was installed in memory of Thomas Scott, Emma Scott and Sarah Ann Scott. The Bishop also re-dedicated the portion of the Douglas memorial window which was reset in the north west corner of the nave.
1938 (18 th September)	The George V Memorial Window at the west end of the church was unveiled by the Duke of Devonshire.
1939 (6 th December)	The 'first sod' was cut by Rev E Gardin, Priest-in-Charge on the Springfield Avenue sight for the foundation of St Mark's Church.
1940 (21 st December)	St Mark's Church, Springfield Avenue, Lower Brampton was dedicated,
1944	Rev. John Dawson Hooley (Canon and Rural Dean Rector).
1946	Land owned by the church forming part of Wash-House Farm was exchanged with the Corporation for land in Quarry Lane with a view to building a future Church Hall there.
1947	A new boiler was installed at St Thomas' along with additional radiators and new electric wiring
1948	The Rector was appointed Rural Dean of Chesterfield.
1949	Mr J C Simon retired from the post of organist and choirmaster at St Thomas'.
1949	A Scout Troup was formed for the first time.
1953	The Rector was designated Canon. The organ was restored and repaired.
1957	Rev. Lionel William Daffurn (Rector).
1958	£630 was raised to paint St Thomas'. The ceiling was treated with a special varnish to preserve the new paintwork.
1961	An appeal was launched to raise £7,500 to buy a Curate's house and construct a sacristy and vestry adjoining the chancel and choir vestry. Thanks to the immediate response, number 558 Chatsworth Road was purchased in August.
1961	The deaths occurred of Mr Percy Shaw a chorister for over 80 years and Mr J F Biggin, vergger for 25 years.
1961	A very significant event in the history of the parish took place during this year when St Mark's was designated a Statutory District with a population of around 4000 people. This measure had the effect of reducing the size of the parish to about three quarters of its' previous population and with a geographical centre now moved further west.

1962	In February a great gale blew 8 stone pinnacles from the tower. One pinnacle came through the church roof causing much damage to fabric and furnishings. One pinnacle was completely renewed and the rest restored and fitted with steel retaining rods. A new boiler with automatic stoker was installed. This work was the result of a five year project and was dedicated in 1967.
1962	Chesterfield was now beginning to expand into the open country side to the North of Ashgate Road with the building of the large Loundsley Green Estate. This was to include a new church and the plans for this were published in October and together with a model were put on national exhibition.
1963 (Good Friday)	A real landmark event was a United Service, possibly the first in parish history, at Mount Zion Church.
1964	A new curate was appointed with special duties in the expanding Loundsley Green area.
1964 (7 th June)	The new vestries were finally dedicated -76 years after the first proposal to build them along with the new chancel and indeed they were built with stone taken from the walls of that very chancel.
1970	St Thomas' Parish Hall (formally St Thomas' Schools) were compulsorily purchased and demolished to make way for a road improvement scheme. This left the Church without a Parish Hall.
1971 (28 th November)	A new Meeting Room, adjoining the north side of the church was dedicated and opened by Cyril Bowles Bishop of Derby.
1973	The Church of the Ascension, Loundsley Green became part of the Parish of St Peter and St Paul, Old Brampton. Although this reduced the area of St Thomas' parish it had little immediate effect on the population since Loundsley Green was mainly new housing which was occupied by people coming into the area. The population of St Thomas' was rising, however, due to the expansion of private housing estates in Walton.
1974	Rev. Vyvyan Watts-Jones (Rector).
1978	A re-ordering scheme was proposed in 3 phases: Phase 1: The altar in the chancel was moved forward from the east wall so that the Rector could celebrate Communion facing the congregation. Phase 2 dealt with the removal of plinths underneath the pews and therefore levelling of the floor. Phase 3 had to do with improvements to the west porch which had formerly been the Baptistry
1981	Phases 2 and 3 of the re-ordering were completed.
1981 (19 th September)	The west entrance was restored for the celebrations of the 150 th Anniversary of St Thomas' Church.
1985	Rev Christopher John Cokayne Friith (Rector collated Canon in 1999).
1986	St Peter' and St John's churches licensed for marriages.

1989	The PCC appointed Buttress Fuller Alsop Williams as architects to prepare a scheme for the re-ordering of St Thomas'. This scheme also had 3 phases: An extension to the Garden of Remembrance. Re-ordering of the interior of the church. A new foyer, meeting rooms, toilets and kitchen facilities (Phases 1 and 2 of these plans was not undertaken until 1999 and phase 3 was postponed until later).
1992	The building of St John's Church Centre took place. More details here.
1996	A Gift Day raised money for the re-ordering of St Thomas' first mooted in 1989. Many months of detailed discussions with the Diocesan Advisory Committee and a Consistory Court followed. The hearing was largely concerned with objections from the Victorian Society over the removal of furniture and fittings from the chancel. The outcome of this hearing was that the chancel was not to be involved in the re-ordering scheme. However the rest of the scheme was allowed to go ahead.
1999 (February)	St Thomas' Church was closed for 8 weeks while the interior of the church (with the exception of the chancel) was reordered. The church was re-opened on Easter Day April 4 th . The Bishop of Derby, Jonathan Bailey, officiated at a service of re-dedication on the same evening. More details here.
2000 (1 st August)	St John's, Walton, became the first new parish of the new Millennium. Once again the parish of St Thomas', Brampton, has been reduced, this time in both geographical area and population size. The Mission Church at Walton was demolished in 2005 and was replaced by a larger building in 2006. More details here.
2002	St Thomas' organ was shut down for several months for cleaning and refurbishment. More details here.
2003 September	The Reverend David P Mouncer was inducted Rector of St Thomas'. More details here.
2006	Planning permission obtained for the next Development Project. More details here.
2007 November	The Reverend David P Mouncer resigned due to ill health
2008 June	The Reverend Matthew Barnes was inducted Rector of St Thomas' More details here.
2011 September	St Thomas' Church Centre was opened on 24 September by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams. More details here.

'Commissioners' Churches'

Were built following the Church Building Act of 1818, sometimes called the Million Act because it voted a grant of £1 million to be spent under the supervision of Commissioners on the building of churches. In all 214 churches were built, concentrated in London and the industrial towns of the Midlands and the north.

They were also called 'Waterloo churches', since the Church Building Act 1818 was passed in part to commemorate the success in the Battle of Waterloo. Other reasons for the Acts were said to be an attempt to stem the tide of Dissent and bringing the established church to those who were not served by Church of England churches, often those affected by industrialisation or living in small poorer villages.

The Lords Commissioner of the Treasury, administered the monies used to assist the building of Commissioners' churches. The churches built using their funds had to represent good value for money. They were to be built "with a view to accommodating the greatest number of persons at the smallest expense within the compass of an ordinary voice, one half of the number to be free seats for the poor".

The Commissioners laid down specific stipulations as to design and personally approved the plans of all churches funded by them. Examples of requirements are "the windows ought not to resemble modern sashes; but whether Grecian or Gothic, should be in small panes and not costly" and "The pulpit should not intercept a view of the altar, but all seats should be placed so as to face the preacher". Commissioners' churches (and others built at the same time) have characteristic features. They have lean proportions. A large rectangle with the altar at the end set in a short chancel. (St Thomas' chancel was extended to its present day size in 1891.) There is often a pulpit on one side of the chancel with a reading desk at a lower level on the other. Windows were long and pointed. Often they have lancet windows with shallow buttresses between.

The Victorians did not favour Commissioners churches. They regarded them as cheap and unworthy. The design and structure of Commissioners churches did not lie easily with developments in the Anglican liturgy and theology in Victorian England. The vast majority were despoiled by Victorian architects. Betjeman says (in the Collins Guide to Parish Churches of England and Wales) that he is aware of only one Commissioners' church which has survived exactly as its architect designed it.

[More about Commissioners churches including a list of all churches can be found here.](#)

[More about the history of St Thomas' can be found here.](#)